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SUBJECT: MEDIA PLAY: (JUNE 13) TOKYO CONFERENCE

Summary. News coverage of the Tokyo Donor Conference faded somewhat, but editorial comment from a variety of perspectives remained robust. Tamil newspapers continued to cover the Tokyo Conference and its aftermath, while Tamil editorial comment urged the government to give an interim administration with authority to the LTTE. State-owned media coverage of Tokyo was light and focused on the potential impact of donor money. Opposition media ran a few sour news headlines about Tokyo, but reserved most of its energy for editorial comment, in which editorialists questioned the motives of the Tigers and urged the Government to prepare militarily. Independent media outlets concentrated on the business community's positive reaction to the Tokyo Conference and commented on cohabitation issues. End summary.

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**2. LTTE statements and other Tamil reaction.**  
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Independent daily VIRAKESARI reported, "Both parties should resume talks - ball in government's court" - Tamil National Alliance," while independent daily THINAKKURAL's headline quoted Deputy Secretary Armitage's CNN interview, "Tokyo assurances based on progress of peace efforts."

Tamil newspapers were also concerned with opposition statements. Independent daily VIRAKESARI reported, "There's no truth in what the opposition party says about [donor] aid," and quoted Lakshman Kadirgamar, Presidential Advisor on International Affairs and Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, "PA is ready for devolution of power after amending the constitution."

Tamil editorial comment urged the government to give an interim administration with authority to the LTTE.

--- Under the editorial headline, "Resumption of talks in government hands," pro-LTTE daily, SUDAR OLI cautioned, "The LTTE is adamant that talks would be futile until a powerful administrative body with authority is established."

Block quotes.

Six rounds of talks between government and LTTE have been completed. Talks were halted when almost all the plans were ready for the seventh round of talks. The question now is whether the talks would continue. A political solution acceptable to everyone should be achieved for the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka. Lasting peace is the requirement of everyone without exception.

The LTTE stressed the need for an interim administrative structure in the early stages of the talks. Many committees were established in lieu of the interim administrative structure, as the provisions in the constitution may have blocked the formation of such a council.

It is not possible to carry out the development and reconstruction work of the north and east with councils with less or limited authority. That is the reason the LTTE is demanding an interim administrative structure until a final settlement is reached for the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka.

The LTTE is adamant that talks would be futile without an interim administrative structure and that they will not take part in talks until such a powerful administrative body with authority is established.

What is the reply of the government? What is the government going to do? The future of peace talks is in the hands of the government.

End block quotes.

--- Under the headline, "Must not allow room for serious division," independent daily THINAKKURAL warned that if serious consideration is not given to the Tigers' request for an interim administration, ".it may not be possible to prevent a situation leading to a serious division in

national politics.

Block quotes.

There was a time when the international community and investors were afraid to assist or invest [in Sri Lanka] because of the prevailing war situation. Now the situation has changed. The pressure applied by the international community that peace is the priority, has opened avenues for assistance and investment, which was evident from the investors that participated at the investors' forum held soon after the Tokyo Donor Conference.

The government sources should realize that all these steps were possible because of the peaceful situation created by the government and the LTTE, and the hope that these two parties move forward for a lasting solution.

More funds were received and more pressure has been applied at the Conference than expected. Now it is time for Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe and his government to bring in cohabitation in local politics and make way for the Tiger demand of the interim administrative structure. Steps should be taken for drastic changes in the political environment and work for an interim administrative structure to undertake the development, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in the north and east, even above the constitution.

If it is not meticulously handled it may not be possible to prevent a situation leading to a serious division in national politics.

End block quotes.

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**13. GSL statements and pro-government reaction.**  
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State-owned media coverage of Tokyo was light and focused on the fate of donor money. State-owned television and radio stations carried several optimistic news items about Tokyo's remit in English and vernacular news programs, including positive reaction from the business community and an interview with a former Finance Minister Ronie de Mel. On a less up-beat note, they also carried Sinhalese chauvinist group Sihala Urumaya's statement that Tokyo aid is misleading the people of Sri Lanka. State-owned English DAILY NEWS' business page reported, "Monitoring foreign aid utilization, project implementation should get priority - Industry leaders."

--- Under the editorial headline, "The economic dimension in peace," state-owned English DAILY NEWS observed, "One effective way of building on this peace foundation is to enhance the economic prospects of the country."

Block quotes.

Although a stable peace could be considered a long distance away at this point in time, Prime Minister Wickremesinghe's bold initiative to find peace by peaceful means and his heady attempt to swim against the tide of political opportunism, have enabled many a Lankan to entertain in her or his heart, the hope of one day drinking deep at the springs of peace.

One effective way of building on this peace foundation is to enhance the economic prospects of the country. This is the reason why the possible positive fallout from the Tokyo donor conference could prove vital. The development funds which have been pledged to Sri Lanka by the world community should be obtained as quickly as possible and ploughed into the development process to enable the wide masses of the country to better their economic condition and to thereby convince themselves that their peace hopes have not been in vain.

However, it is also important to realise that poverty has to be dealt with on a multi-pronged basis. What needs to be aimed at is not mere economic growth but equitable growth.

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**14. Opposition statements and pro-opposition reaction.**  
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Opposition media ran a few sour news headlines about Tokyo, but reserved most of its energy for editorial comment. Independent, but nationalist-leaning, English daily, ISLAND reported, "If IA is outside constitution so is MoU" - Most Tamil parties justify LTTE demand," and "Tokyo donor conference: Govt. misleading people - Sihala Urumaya."

Opposition editorialists questioned the motives of the Tigers and urged the Government to prepare militarily.

--- Under the editorial headline, "Warlord preparing for war again?" independent, but nationalist-leaning, English daily ISLAND advised, "The armed forces must be put on full alert. Prabhakaran has a tendency to repeat history."

Block quotes.

Velupillai Prabhakaran, like most terrorist leaders, is attributed with 'lateral thinking'- thinking diametrically opposite to conventional ways.

He appeared to be recovering after the 18-month bout of sanity and courtship by a misguided 'international community', but now has once again rebuffed the world's most powerful nations. He has rejected the proposal for an Interim Administration made by Prime Minister Wickremesinghe at Tokyo. He now refuses to negotiate and demands an Interim Administration on his terms that would go against the provisions of the Constitution. Some military analysts now predict that the warlord is heading for war.

However much we may yearn for peace, this militarisation of the LTTE cannot be ignored and the government forces must be prepared for a lightning blitzkrieg by the terrorists. Government forces in the Jaffna peninsula are by no means well placed and the LTTE may be tempted to stage a lightning strike, wipe out the vital Palaly camp and then declare peace once again! The armed forces must be put on full alert. Prabhakaran has a tendency to repeat history.  
End block quotes.

--- The ISLAND's Sinhala sister daily DIVAINA, headlined, "Seeing the brighter side of Tiger reaction," on its editorial page, and commented, "The Tigers were waiting to snatch the whole aid package. In a way it is good that they did not turn up in Tokyo, as this shows that we can take care of ourselves."

Block quotes.

As we see it, the Tokyo aid is the Government's great achievement. The Tigers did not contribute to it, they only fretted about it.

Their comments on the Prime Minister's statement [suggesting an interim authority] is baseless, his Tokyo objective was to search for financial support to rebuild a country ruined by war and politicians. He was not expected to relate a never-heard-before fairy tale, the Tigers have the Norwegians for story telling."

The Tigers were waiting to snatch the whole aid package. In a way it is good that they did not turn up in Tokyo, as this shows that we can take care of ourselves.

The LTTE will say that the Tokyo declaration does not apply to them. That has been the case always. Morals and virtue were always taboo for the Tigers. We are aware of it.

End block quotes.

#### ----- **15. Independent media reaction.** -----

Independent media outlets concentrated on the business community's positive reaction to the Tokyo Conference, but commented on cohabitation issues editorially. Echoing television and radio news reports, independent English DAILY MIRROR reported, "Foreign cash fails to lift Sri Lanka peace prospects."

--- Under the editorial headline, "Sri Lanka's plight," independent English DAILY MIRROR commented, "It is not negative criticism, therefore that is needed from the opposition, but effective cooperation to clear the hurdles the country is confronted with today."

Block quotes.

There is nothing unusual or surprising about what the PA spokesman Sarath Amunugama said the other day trivialising the record quantum of aid promised to this country at the Tokyo meeting.

It is this plight the country is placed in today that compels it to seek outside assistance to solve its internal problems, and foreign donations to resuscitate the economy. Even these lavish foreign donations will not improve our situation unless these funds are prudently utilized. The statement made by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe who steered the country to the Tokyo Conference delineates the constraints that militate against the proper utilisation of these donations. He said, "Sri Lanka has to overcome the delays, the blockages and the inertia of its bureaucratized apparatus and transform it into one capable of speedy implementation, where work is done efficiently and effectively."

It is not negative criticism, therefore that is needed from the opposition, but effective cooperation to clear the hurdles the country is confronted with today.

End block quotes.

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